



## FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE QUEEN ANNE/ MAGNOLIA DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

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Project Number: 3013571

Address: 528 Pontius Avenue North

Applicant: Jon Hall of GGLO

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, April 24, 2013

Board Members Present: Mindy Black  
Magdalena Hogness  
Katie Idziorek  
Jill Kurfirst  
Boyd Pickrell  
Janet Stephenson

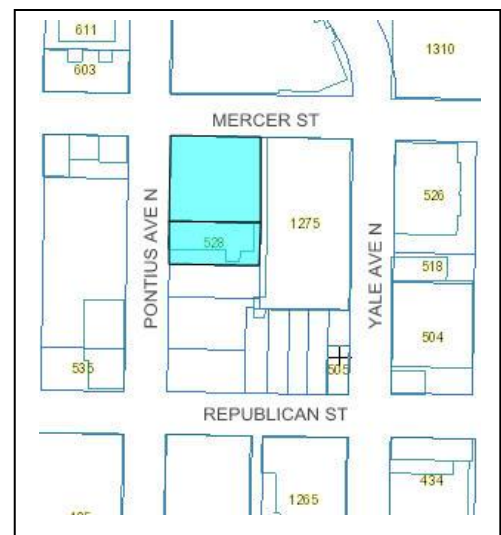
DPD Staff Present: Bruce P. Rips

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### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Seattle Mixed / Residential with a 55 to 75' height limit (SM/R 55/75). It lies within the South Lake Union Urban Center.

Nearby Zones: SM/R 55/75 extends south to John St. and east to Yale Ave N. SM 75 defines the area to the west of I-5 to Yale Ave N and extends west to the border of the Cascade Park. The Industrial Commercial with a 65' height limit begins at the alley between Minor Ave N Fairview Ave. N. and extends west.



Site Description:	The site consists of 20,800 square feet with 128' of frontage on Mercer St and 160' of frontage on Pontius Ave. N. The site's seven foot declension begins from the southeast and runs diagonally to the northwest. A one-story building occupies the southern portion of the site. The rest of the property contains surface parking.
Access:	Potential access on either Mercer St or Pontius Ave N.
Surrounding Development & Neighborhood Character:	The Cascade neighborhood represents a significant portion of the large South Lake Union area. In recent years, the low-rise warehouse, back office and industrial character of the neighborhood has dramatically changed with midrise development housing technology based companies, and mid-rise residential buildings. AMLI Residential Partners have developed two other projects in the immediate vicinity: a residential building directly to the west across Pontius Ave. and a recently permitted mixed use project to the south separated by a small playground. Other projects either recently built or under DPD review include the Art Stable on Yale Ave, the full block Laundry Block proposal immediately south of Republican St., Alley 24 three blocks to the south and Alcyone, a mixed use project west of Cascade Park. The Amazon complex sits several blocks to the west. Recreational opportunities occur at nearby Lake Union and Cascade parks.
ECAs:	No mapped environmental critical areas (ECA).

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a seven story residential structure housing 127 dwelling units with below grade parking for 150 vehicles. The existing building on the site would be demolished.

## DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The three massing concepts introduced to the public and the Design Review Board highlight the placement of open space both at or near grade and at the rooftop. The variations in the massing of the large cubic volume occur in the orientation of the courtyard. In Concept #1, the architect carves a seven-floor courtyard oriented to the south overlooking the adjacent playground and the yet to be built AMLI project. The second and third options oriented the courtyard to the east. As presented at the EDG meeting, the design team positions the rooftop amenity space at the volumes northwest corner to capture views of Lake Union and the Space Needle. In Concept #2 the courtyard remains enclosed on three sides by residential units. The fourth side opens toward a one-story building and a shared access easement. Concept # 3 allows the courtyard to

slide underneath the upper floors and connect to Pontius Ave N. A wide, two-story aperture announces a gateway that at once becomes a mixture of semi-public and private open spaces. The covered western most space would have the most public presence. To the east, the space divides into lawn and front entrances to seven, two-story lofts.

The design's intention, to create a series of entrance porches or stoops along the Pontius Ave. and Mercer St. perimeter, has its most extensive articulation in Concept #2. Crenulated walls in plan form two-story entrances anchored by an amenity space at the corner of the two streets. Concepts #1 and 3 place the driveway to the below grade parking garage near the site's northeast corner off Mercer St., the busier of the two streets. In Concept #2 the curb cut and driveway shifts to Pontius Ave near the south property line. In all three schemes, the dwelling units are arranged in a fairly conventional double loaded corridor scheme.

By the Recommendation meeting, the architect responded to the earlier guidance and had refined Option # 3. A significant change occurred with the proposed enclosure of the roof top open space at the structure's northwest corner.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

One person affixed her name to the Recommendation meeting sign-in sheet. The speaker raised a question about the size of the mechanical penthouses.

## **PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS**

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provided the following siting and design guidance. The Board identified the Citywide Design Guidelines & Neighborhood specific guidelines (as applicable) of highest priority for this project.

The Neighborhood specific guidelines are summarized below. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

### **A. Site Planning**

**A-2 Streetscape Compatibility. The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.**

**SLU-specific supplemental guidance:**

**The vision for street level uses in South Lake Union is a completed network of sidewalks that successfully accommodate pedestrians. Streetscape compatibility is a high priority of the neighborhood with redevelopment. Sidewalk-related spaces should appear safe, welcoming and open to the general public.**

- **Provide pedestrian-friendly streetscape amenities, such as:**

tree grates; benches; lighting.

- Encourage provision of spaces for street level uses that vary in size, width, and depth. Encourage the use of awnings and weather protection along street fronts to enhance the pedestrian environment.
- Where appropriate, consider a reduction in the required amount of commercial and retail space at the ground level, such as in transition zones between commercial and residential areas. Place retail in areas that are conducive to the use and will be successful.
- Where appropriate, configure retail space so that it can spill-out onto the sidewalk (retaining six feet for pedestrian movement, where the sidewalk is sufficiently wide).

The Board accepted the streetscape design and recommended approval of the related departures.

**A-4 Human Activity. New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.**

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Create graceful transitions at the streetscape level between the public and private uses.
- Keep neighborhood connections open, and discourage closed campuses.
- Design facades to encourage activity to spill out from business onto the sidewalk, and vice-versa.
- Reinforce pedestrian connections both within the neighborhood and to other adjacent neighborhoods. Transportation infrastructure should be designed with adjacent sidewalks, as development occurs to enhance pedestrian connectivity.
- Reinforce retail concentrations with compatible spaces that encourage pedestrian activity.
- Create businesses and community activity clusters through co-location of retail and pedestrian uses as well as other high pedestrian traffic opportunities.
- Design for a network of safe and well-lit connections to encourage human activity and link existing high activity areas.

No further guidance was provided.

**A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites. Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on their sites to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.**

The applicant responded to the earlier guidance by setting the structure a total of eight feet from the south property line. This met the Board's approval.

**A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street. For residential projects, the space between the building and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.**

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

Consider designing the entries of residential buildings to enhance the character of the streetscape through the use of small gardens, stoops and other elements to create a transition between the public and private areas. Consider design options to accommodate various residential uses, i.e., townhouse, live-work, apartment and senior-assisted housing.

**A-7 Residential Open Space. Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.**

The applicant replaced the northwest corner open space with a 20 foot high glass solarium. Enclosing the corner roof top open space met received Board acceptance.

**A-10 Corner Lots. Building on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.**

Following up on the earlier guidance, the Board welcomed the understated treatment of the corner at street level.

<b>B. Height, Bulk and Scale</b>
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**B-1 Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility. Projects should be compatible with the scale of development anticipated by the applicable Land Use Policies for the surrounding area and should be sited and designed to provide a sensitive transition to near-by, less intensive zones. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk, and scale between anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.**

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Address both the pedestrian and auto experience through building placement, scale and details with specific attention to regional transportation corridors such as Mercer, Aurora, Fairview and Westlake. These locations, pending changes in traffic patterns, may evolve with transportation improvements.
- Encourage stepping back an elevation at upper levels for development taller than 55 feet to take advantage of views and increase sunlight at street level. Where stepping back upper floors is not practical or appropriate other design considerations may be considered, such as modulations or separations between structures.
- Relate proportions of buildings to the width and scale of the street.
- Articulate the building facades vertically or horizontally in intervals that relate to the existing structures or existing pattern of development in the vicinity.
- Consider using architectural features to reduce building scale such as: landscaping; trellis; complementary materials; detailing; accent trim.

Rather than adding modulation to the elevation's vertical plane as suggested in earlier guidance, the architect responded by setting the building back about eight feet from the

shared property line with the playground. The architect added color to the projecting frames around each window endowing the south façade with a separate color at each floor level.

## **C. Architectural Elements and Materials**

- C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency.** Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept. Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building. In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its facade walls.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

Design the “fifth elevation” — the roofscape — in addition to the streetscape. As this area topographically is a valley, the roofs may be viewed from locations outside the neighborhood such as the freeway and Space Needle. Therefore, views from outside the area as well as from within the neighborhood should be considered, and roof-top elements should be organized to minimize view impacts from the freeway and elevated areas.

The Board recommended that the two-story datum line established on the west and north facades should extend the full length of the south and west facades with the same color and/or materials to provide visual continuity.

Although it replaced open space, the solarium received the Board’s endorsement; however, in order to ensure the integrity of its cubic form, the architect must work with the planner to provide greater resolution to the fenestration design. The sliding glass doors break the consistency of the spandrel on the west and north elevations.

- C-3 Human Scale.** The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements, and details to achieve a good human scale.

The earlier guidance focused on the scale of the entry portal to the courtyard. At the Recommendation meeting, no further discussion ensued.

- C-4 Exterior Finish Materials.** Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.

The selection of mesh for the balcony walls and the entrance wall and gate provoked considerable discussion. Question arose as to its integrity and quality. The applicant will work with the land use planner to ensure well detailed and high quality mesh. Should the applicant choose to use glass rather than mesh, the Board would find this satisfactory.

- C-5     Structured Parking Entrances. The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.**

No further discussion of the garage entrance occurred.

<b>D.     Pedestrian Environment</b>
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- D-1     Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances. Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open space should be considered.**

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- New developments are encouraged to work with the Design Review Board and interested citizens to provide features that enhance the public realm, i.e. the transition zone between private property and the public right of way. The Board is generally willing to consider a departure in open space requirements if the project proponent provides an acceptable plan for features such as: curb bulbs adjacent to active retail spaces where they are not interfering with primary corridors that are designated for high levels of traffic flow; pedestrian-oriented street lighting; street furniture.

Prior deliberation focused on the amount of light into the covered passageway, the sequencing of spaces through the passageway/outdoor amenity area and relationship of the individual unit entries to the two streets and the adjacent public realm. The solutions offered at the meeting satisfied the Board.

- D-6     Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities, and Service Areas. Building sites should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible. When elements such as dumpsters, utility meters, mechanical units and service areas cannot be located away from the street front, they should be situated and screened from view and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.**

The Board found the location and operation of the solid waste storage area acceptable.

- D-7     Personal Safety and Security. Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.**

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Enhance public safety throughout the neighborhood to foster 18-hour public activity. Methods to consider are: enhanced pedestrian and street lighting; well- designed public spaces that are defensively designed with clear sight lines and opportunities for eyes on the street; police horse tie-up locations for routine patrols and larger event assistance.

The arrangement of fences and gates into the complex appeared appropriate, particularly at the courtyard.

- D-12 Residential Entries and Transitions.** For residential projects in commercial zones, the space between the residential entry and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and a visually interesting street front for pedestrians. Residential buildings should enhance the character of the streetscape with small gardens, stoops and other elements that work to create a transition between the public sidewalk and private entry.

The applicant responded to the earlier guidance by increasing the depth of the stoops or patios in front of units facing Mercer St.

<b>E. Landscaping</b>
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- E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites.** Where possible, and where there is not another overriding concern, landscaping should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Support the creation of a hierarchy of passive and active open space within South Lake Union. This may include pooling open space requirements on-site to create larger spaces.
- Encourage landscaping that meets LEED criteria. This is a priority in the Cascade neighborhood.
- Where appropriate, install indigenous trees and plants to improve aesthetics, capture water and create habitat.
- Retain existing, non-intrusive mature trees or replace with large caliper trees.
- Water features are encouraged including natural marsh-like installations.
- Reference the City of Seattle Right Tree Book and the City Light Streetscape Light Standards Manual for appropriate landscaping and lighting options for the area.

The Board questioned the usability of the landscaped area between the south elevation and the playground. No further guidance or recommendation incurred.

- E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site.** Landscaping, including living plant material, special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture, and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.

SLU-specific supplemental guidance:

- Consider integrating artwork into publicly accessible areas of a building and landscape that evokes a sense of place related to the previous uses of the area. Neighborhood themes may include service industries such as laundries, auto row, floral businesses, photography district, arts district, maritime, etc.



The landscape design formed a strong narrative reinforcing the building concept. The entry and courtyard, resonate with the idea of hearth and table, provides a strong axial circulation and an armature for an array of associated communal spaces. The designs for the common areas and the private courts for the six interior residential units support a cosmopolitan vision of urban life. The short metal bridge from sidewalk to entry court announces in subtle form the transition from the pedestrian realm to a semi-private room for gathering and circulation.

The distinct approaches to building form and landscaping at the Pontius and Mercer street frontages recognize the separate conditions of the two streets, yet visually unite in ensemble.

**Recommendations:** The recommendations summarized below were based on the plans and models submitted at the April 24, 2013 meeting. Design, siting or architectural details not specifically identified or altered in these recommendations are expected to remain as presented in the plans and other drawings available at the April 24, 2013 public meeting. After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, and reviewing the plans and renderings, the Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design and the requested development standard departures from the requirements of the Land Use Code (listed below). The Board recommends the following CONDITIONS for the project. (Authority referred in the letter and number in parenthesis):

- 1) The two-story datum line established on the west and north facades should continue the length of the east and south elevations with the same color and/or materials to provide visual continuity and consistency. (C-2)
- 2) In order to ensure the integrity of the solarium's cubic form, the architect shall work with the planner to provide greater resolution to the fenestration design. (C-2)
- 3) The applicant will work with the land use planner to ensure well detailed and high quality mesh at the balconies and entry to the portal. (C-4)

## DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) are based upon the departure's potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall design than could be achieved without the departure(s).

STANDARD	REQUIREMENT	REQUEST	JUSTIFICATION	RECOMMENDATION
1. Street-Level Setbacks. SMC 23.48.014D	Structures may be set back up to 12' from the property line. Additional setbacks shall be permitted for up to 30% of the length of the setback street wall.	37% of the Mercer St. façade is setback 13'9" from the property line.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Board requested deep stoops along Mercer St. (A-2)</li><li>Provides a consistent pattern of entries along the street. (D-1)</li></ul>	Recommended Approval. 6-0 vote
2. Street Level Landscaping SMC 23.48.014D.1 B	Structures may be set back up to 12' from the property line and the setback area shall be landscaped according to SMC 23.48.024.	Patio terrace hardscape and concrete driveway is proposed in some areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Board requested deep stoops along Mercer (A-2).</li><li>Mercer St. was agreed upon as most likely location for garage access. (C-5)</li></ul>	Recommended Approval. 6-0 vote

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